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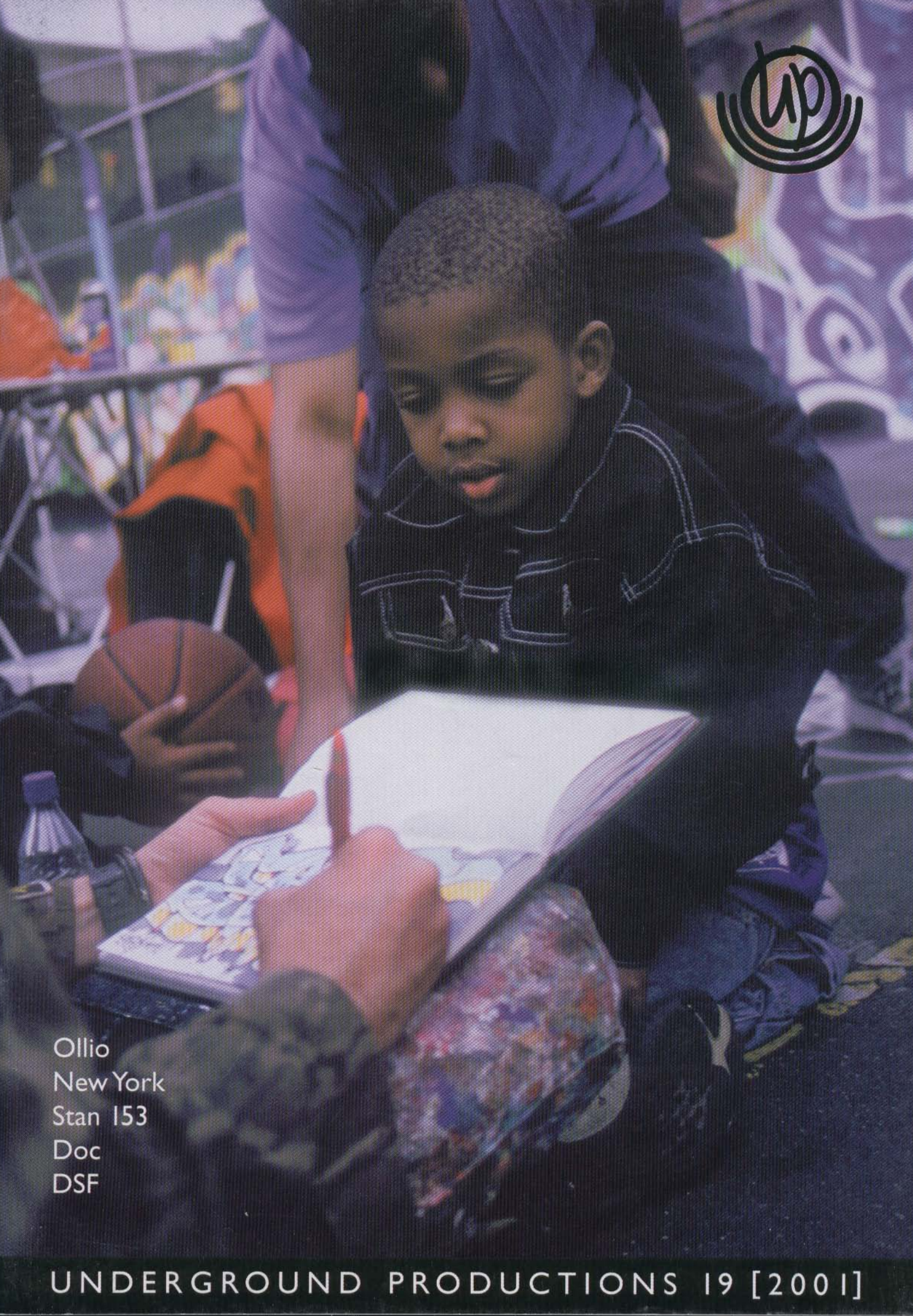

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Text: Malcolm, Jacob, Tobias, Torkel
Layout: Malin, Malcolm, Tobias
English translation: Martin Thomson
Photo: Malcolm, Jacob, Malin, Tobias, Slin 2, Merk 1 and everybody who supported us!
Ads: Tobias Barenthin Lindblad
ISSN: 1401-8659
Printed by New Interlitho, Milano 2001

ADDRESS:

Underground Productions
Box 773
S-120 02 Årsta
Sweden

www.underground-productions.se
up@underground-productions.se

Cover Photo by Jacob Kimvall. A young kid watches Ease writing in a blackbook, Harlem Hall of Fame, May 2001.

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Three times Ollio along the tram line in Gothenburg, summer 2001

Ollio: "I want people to dislike my tags"

The atmosphere of the Gothenburg Graffiti scene is friendly. I spend a few days with Ollio and his friends. We photograph paintings, have barbecues, drink beer, paint a wall and party.

According to Ollio, it is thanks to this ambience that he is a writer. As a boy he was gentle and obedient. He played role-playing games and listened to techno music; Graffiti was not at all a part of his lifestyle. But he found some Graffiti magazines at some friends' house. He borrowed them and decided to start painting characters.

Ollio did his first paintings in a condemned building in the Hisingen area, together with Soul, whom he had met. The house was named "Thug House" after the Thug Crew that hung out there. Ollio wanted to paint more.

"The problem then was that I didn't know that many writers. I had to call friends and pester them to join me."

Some time later, when Soul and Ollio became room-mates, Ollio started painting seriously. He also started tagging at that time. He had earlier disliked tags, having been taught in school that tags were ugly acts of vandalism.

When I watch Ollio go tagging, he is like a heat-seeking missile. All other sense are shut off. He moves decisively, with a clear focus. After having done a tag, he immediately directs his attention to his environment to see where to place the next one.

Many people feel that tags are the most provocative element of hip-hop culture. Ollio realises that people find them irksome.

Do you have any advice to someone who would like to learn to appreciate tags?

"I want people to dislike my tags. But if you start reading tags they become interesting. Then you see that the same person has been to several places."

At first, Ollio had some trouble delineating the letters. It was almost impossible. He imitated upside-down letters, so that it wouldn't show so much that he was copying them. He was mainly inspired by Danish writers like Bates, Sabe and Swet. When he started writing as Mouse, he was inspired by Ayes, Gone and Sne from UMA Crew in Gothenburg. After a year, he grew tired of the name Mouse.

Your name is a central element of our society. You are born and live with your name. The name is you. Graffiti writers have the possibility to assume a new name.

Ollio and his friends like to say the word *Også*, the Danish word for also. When Ollio first wrote it he discovered that the letters went together well and it became his new tag. At the same time, he got to know writers from Stockholm who influenced his style.

"Unik from Stockholm thought that Gothenburg writers were cowardly and didn't dare to try out new stuff. This opened my eyes."

Ollio's best recipe for not getting stuck in a rut is to change his tag often.

After a year, he estimates that sufficient time has elapsed. By changing his tag he gets lots of new ideas, and takes a stylistic jump forwards.

Ollio

Ollio

One early morning, Happy Meal at the Gothenburg harbour

"I tried writing Ollie, a skateboard term, and then added an 'O' at the end. I enjoy humor in graffiti, both Også and Ollio are humorous names.

The next one will be even funnier. People remember strange names easier, classical graffiti names are all so alike. I think Os are really cool! "Ollio" looks like ones and zeroes!"

During his Også phase, Ollio attended art school. Though it didn't much affect his lettering style, he did acquire a consciousness of the importance of colours, how they work together and how to use contrasts.

Stylistically, he has too many ideas, there just isn't enough time. At the same time, though, he admits to biting some stuff.

"It's a pity, really, but sometimes when I dry up I check out the magazines, and then it's hard not to steal ideas. The styles I like best are from Stockholm, France, Barcelona and some Danish writers. Here in Gothenburg there are maybe two or three writers who inspire me."

Integrity is important in a painting. Ollio prefers to go over the wall with a roller before painting it. Then he works a lot on background, second outlines and details in the piece. This holistic approach is due to the fact that it is only now that he feels quite sure of his style. It is inspiring to watch Ollio write: he works in a focussed and confident manner. He writes quickly and without pausing, working with roller and spray cans like a boxer. Nevertheless, new ideas seem to pop up all the time and the painting has a fresh feeling to it.

But he does get dissatisfied.

"Bad pieces are a dime a dozen. New ideas get better with time!"

How would you define your style?

"Like train pieces, but on walls. I like to write fast. Preferably with fat caps. I saw Blue writing at the Roskilde festival in 98, and I was very inspired by her way of painting sloppily.

Later years have been eventful in the Gothenburg graffiti scene. Ollio says that a

Ooxåå – 2001

Error and Ollio, characters by Jinx – 2001

Oxå on a freight train – 2001

Ollio on a parking house – 2001

lot of new writers have emerged, the scene has become more divided and there are many different styles.

Where do you get your ideas?

"From the fact that graffiti is my favorite thing! Writing, checking out paintings, sketching, meeting people, talking about graffiti. I know most of my friends through writing. I immediately have something in common with other youths. In practice, you can go anywhere in the world and hang out at once. Another great advantage with graffiti is the nature experience. I have been in so many weird places I wouldn't have seen otherwise: city outskirts, industrial zones, small towns and train yards. Biking through Gothenburg at night is something I would never have done if I didn't write.

What is graffiti to you?

"Hmm... graffiti is time, it takes a lot of time and costs a lot of money. But most of all it's fun, it's good always to have something to do. Schools should have graffiti projects to stop kids from taking drugs."

At the same time, though, graffiti is like a drug. Ollio says it is a dependency that increasingly demands his time. He gets performance anxiety if he doesn't write enough. Graffiti is really all about breaking the limits. You learn to live without many material assets, and if Ollio were more audacious, he wouldn't care about getting caught.

"When you owe hundreds of thousands, you don't have to care any more, you can write as much as you like. I heartily recommend it! But, of course," he adds pensively, "you could get sent to jail."

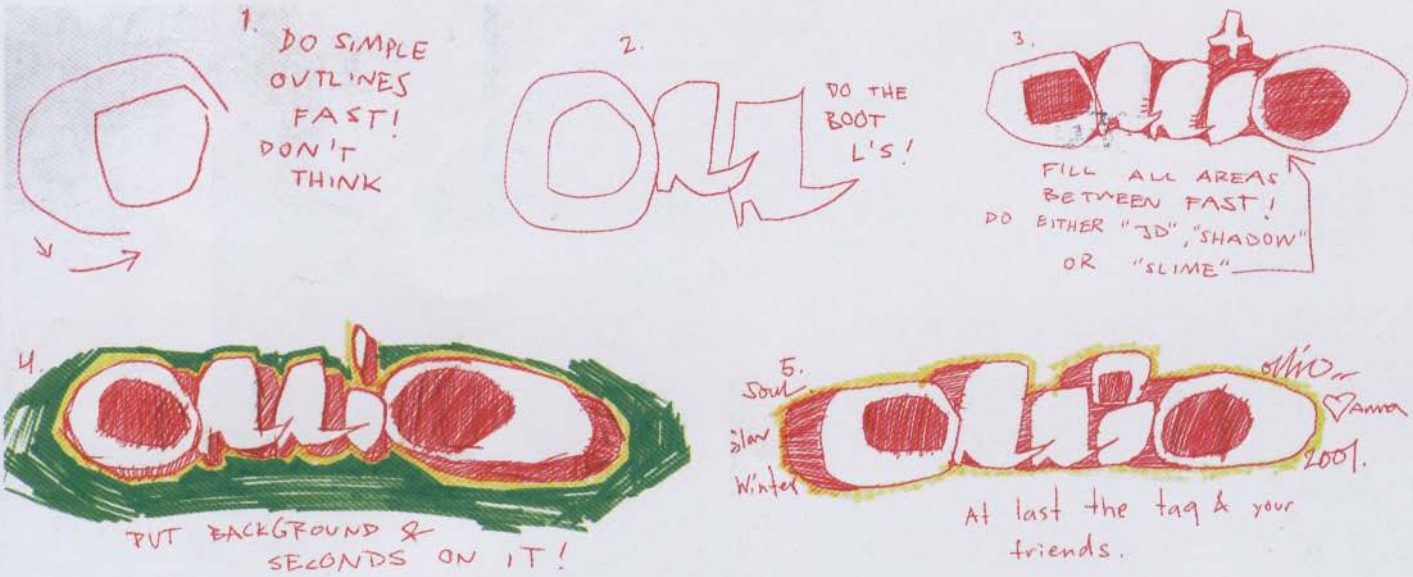
Tobias Barenthin Lindblad

Ollio at a Gothenburg commuter train – 2001

Oxåå – 2001

Ollio and a character by Gouge – 2001

Bingo, Ollio – 2001


1. DO SIMPLE OUTLINES FAST! DON'T THINK
2. DO THE BOOT L'S!
3. FILL ALL AREAS BETWEEN FAST! DO EITHER "3D", "SHADOW" OR "SLIME"
4. PUT BACKGROUND & SECONDS ON IT!
5. Soul Slav Winter
Ollio
Anna
2001.
At last the tag & your friends.

A step by step description by Ollio – this is how it could be done

Ollio speaks about his evolution in style

Beleive – 1996: This was my first painting. It was harder than I thought, It didn't end up the way I wanted it to. It was really hard controlling the flow of paint, it got so thick! It's pretty phat that I made a spelling mistake. I remember being paranoid. I guess I succeeded all right with the idea.

Mouse – 1998: I was really satisfied when I did it. I really succeeded with the style. The place was cool, and it was a warm day when we did it. I did stars on nearly all the Mouse pieces. This was the Majorna style a few years ago. It is quite influenced by Bates, Swet and Prize, a writer from Gothenburg.

Også – 2000: The painting was done inside a condemned building we called the Caviar house. That was a really cool fame that we were the first to find. At the end there were more than 300 pieces in there. I did the painting on the side of the house one warm summer night. Stylistically I was in an experimental phase, I had no concepts but just tried different styles all the time. I was really satisfied with this piece. It is probably quite Stockholm influenced, perhaps a bit of old Skil-style on the 'S', for instance. I still use repetition, in this case the dots. I learned that at art school. This was also a very eventful time, we started selling Montana paint and the Gothenburg graffiti scene really got going.

Oooxåå – 2001: A freight train I did with Slav (UP #18, page 34). That was a poor period, I hardly had any paint at all, but I was really satisfied. I found a red can, bought a white one, and had some bits at home. During this time, I often repeated 'O's and 'Å's to get a longer piece. I've made a lot of pieces with big 'X's too. I think I'll keep on with it.

Ålliå – 2001

Ollio and Rilo, entering the Yard – Fall 2001

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FOOTWEAR

Katch 22 – Phun Phactory in Queens 2001

New York – graffiti everywhere – exept in the subway

East Village, Manhattan

The New York Graffiti scene 2001 isn't as large as it was in the 70s and 80s, but it is more diverse than before. Graffiti is visible everywhere, except in the subway, where all that is visible is scratched window-panes and the odd tag. Instead, what you see are burner walls and tags in the streets. Moreover, the influence of Graffiti is clearly visible in many of the exclusive shops downtown.

A large black car with smoked windows looms up behind us as we photograph a burner in Brooklyn. We have enough time to wonder if it is a policeman from the Vandal Squad, or someone who is going to rob us, before the window slides open. Behind the wheel is a powerfully-built black guy with dreadlocks and gold teeth.

"Hey, Man!"

"Yes?" we ask, carefully.

"Have you seen the piece over at Union and Seventh?"

No, we haven't seen it, and the guy explains that we should go and photograph it. He tells us it is much better, and then drives on.

This is just one of several similar episodes that take place as we photograph paintings in New York. In the South Bronx, Queens and Spanish Harlem, we are met with the same helpfulness and pride of the local burners.

One often encounters these gigantic murals when moving around New York. Often they are the work of writers who started in the 70s and 80s, who now mainly write legally on industrial façades. For some of them, painting murals has become a way to make a living.

Every year at the end of May, the Graffiti elite of New York meet at the Hall of Fame, a schoolyard in Spanish Harlem. This year is the twentieth anniversary, and the organ-

Williamsburg, Brooklyn

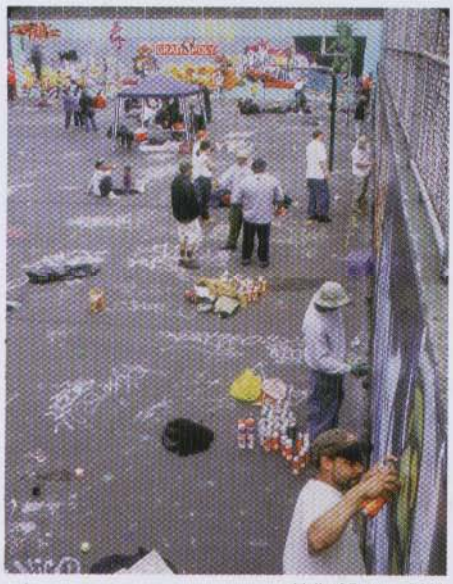
Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Who's who at Graffiti Hall of Fame in Harlem 2001

isers have brought a large sound system, barbecue grills and soda. For the first time, this year's happening is sponsored: most writers were equipped with German Molotow cans. Ecko also distributes T-shirts to all the writers and the writer-owned brands PNB and Writers Bench are represented in different paintings.

Pugism, who lives nearby, has brought a chair and sits watching Stan 153 and Chain 3 as they paint. He says he comes every year to have a look. "I used to write before, but this is my only contact with Graffiti nowadays," he continues. This seems to be the case with many of those present today. The whole affair is reminiscent of a class reunion, and we witness many meetings of people who haven't seen each other in years. Not only writers, but also breakdancers from the Rock Steady Crew and rappers from the Crash Crew shows up.

Dez now goes by the name Kay Slay and makes an appearance to do his yearly painting, bringing a following of buddies with



Hall of Fame – 2001

Hall of Fame – 2001

Grafopoly concept by Prisco. Siem, Dask, Clown, Prisco, Part, Camp, Dez, Need – Hall of fame 2001

him. Before he begins to write, he stands next to one of the guys and declares that this is Craig Mack, who is dropping a dope new album soon.

Many writers have brought their entire families to the Hall of Fame. Younger writers have brought their blackbooks and are collecting autographs. Stan 153 has brought a bass and sits jamming with a guy who has brought a guitar. The atmosphere is relaxed, though some seventy people are working on their paintings.

It doesn't seem very hard to get permission to do a wall in New York, at least not if you can show pictures of your earlier burners. For less established writers it may be harder to find a space where writing is allowed.

By taking the No. 7 subway to Court House Square, you get to Phun Phactory, a large industrial building which stands shortly after the place where the No. 7 emerges at Hunters Point Avenue. Nearly the entire facade is covered by paintings. Outside the

Hall of Fame – 2001

Dez, Chain 3 and Jap One checking out the pieces in the Hall of Fame.

OH, Muse, Ovie, Supreme by Doc, Risk, Dash, Keo, Wane, Cycle – Hall of Fame 2001

Keze and Both in Brooklyn

office, some ten young teens are hanging around and show us to the fiery soul, its founder Pat Di Lillo.

A young guy asks Pat if he can do a piece. No, he hasn't written at phun Phactory before. Pat asks him if he has brought any pictures.

"Pictures of the work I've done?" asks the young boy nervously. Pat does nothing to help him out.

"Of course," he replies.

The boy has no pictures, but offers to make a sketch. Not good enough. He says he's from New Jersey, and has heard that one is allowed to write at Phun Phactory. He didn't know the rules, he says, by way of apology. Pat stares at him blankly.

"Okay, if you draw a sketch, you can do one of the toy walls at the back."

The guy looks deflated.

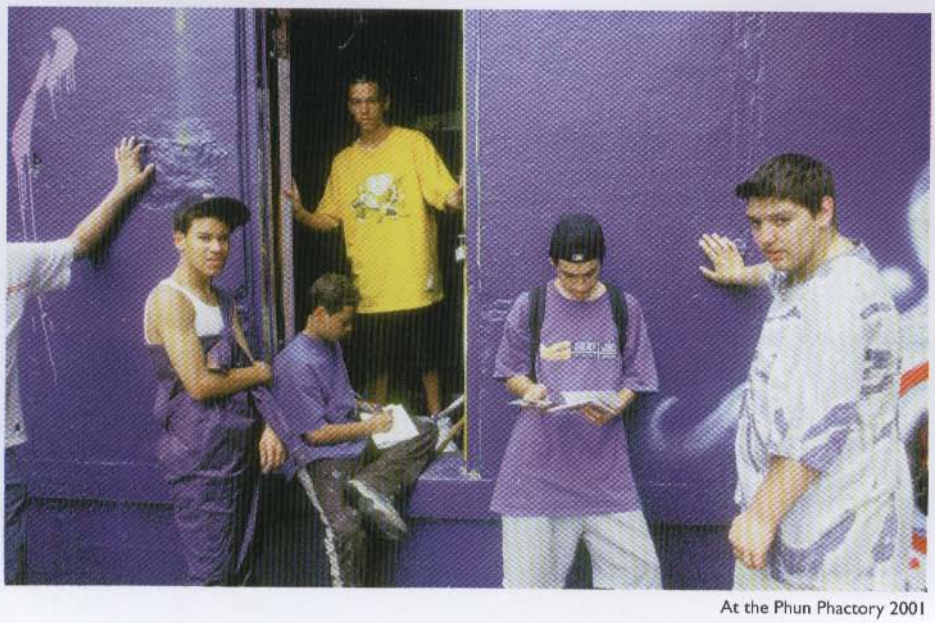
"A toy wall?"

"Yeah, a toy wall!"

The boy swallows his pride, is issued with paper and pencil, and goes off to the loading bay outside the office. Pat is a big, middle-aged man who started combating Graffiti after a work injury put him into early retirement. In search of something to do, he started the organisation Graffiti Terminators, who removed Graffiti charitably. After a few years, he gave up, and started Phun Phactory instead, figuring that if he could not exterminate Graffiti, he could at least have a say in what was painted, make sure that well-crafted paintings were made rather than tags and throw-ups. Nowadays he and the others who run Phun Phactory seems more driven by an interest in Graffiti as an art form.

Pat's earlier friends in the anti-Graffiti movement see him as a traitor and are running an intense campaign against him. In his view, the authorities have lost the war against Graffiti and are consequently attacking him instead. When Pat is told that the Vandal Squad makes trips to Scandinavia to learn Graffiti-fighting techniques, he only sniffs. "If they're so damn successful, why don't they tell me why the city is covered in tags?"

Pat's right, apart from certain areas of Manhattan, the city is covered in tags. Downtown, mainly Earsnot and Irak Crew are visible. They also occur in just about



At the Phun Phactory 2001

WK – Manhattan 2001

every hip magazine we see in New York. Their wild life in the streets and clubs of New York, with large amounts of violence and drugs, are reported in detail. They are hardly representative of Graffiti writers, but constitute an excellent spice for magazines that aspire to both underground and commercial success.

The link between Graffiti and the commercial world is very clear. Companies pay writers to spray their logos around town – a way of borrowing some of Graffiti's rebellious image.

Alife is both a shop and a gallery, partly run by writers. It stands in an airy, elegantly-furnished locale. Laid-back Latino jazz comes out of the loudspeakers and the walls are covered in paintings. The artist Rostarr

Phun Phactory 2001

Manhattan 2001

West One at Bob's Bar 2001

Year, Chelsea 2001

Lewy, Harlem 2001

Manhattan 2001

Alife

Diego 127, Bronx 2001

is exhibiting. He is not a writer, but his colorful pictures with stylised characters and patterns clearly are linked with Graffiti. In the middle of the room are glass cases containing exclusive shoes, broad pens and bottles of KRink paint, developed by the writer KR. The paint is used to do many of the silver tags that can be seen around town. The Graffiti paraphernalia feels a bit like an exotic element in the shop, perhaps 'something for us tourists to bring home'. Most Graffiti writers, however, probably go to Scrap Yard instead, a tiny shop selling Graffiti magazines, shirts, pens and other objects. Scrap Yard is no exclusive boutique, rather a Graffiti supermarket.

Malcolm Jacobson & Jacob Kimvall

Keo, Reas, Dash, 2001

Williamsburg, Brooklyn 2001

Jaytee, Houston Street, Manhattan 2001

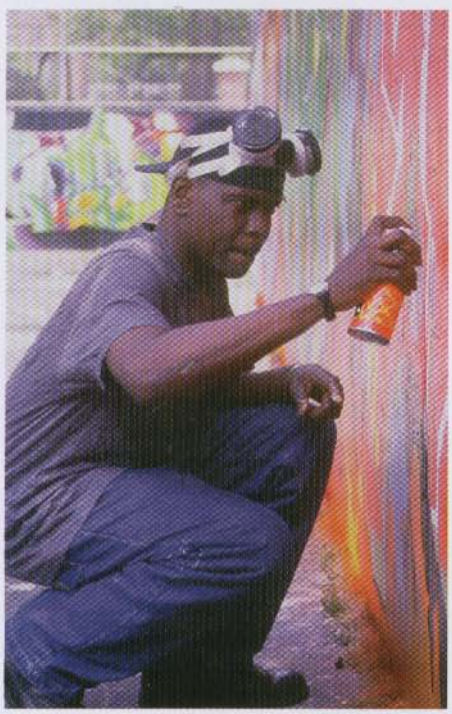
Manhattan 2001

TATs crew together with Crash, Daze and Os Gemeos, Bronx 2001

Muse, TKid, Part, OH, Ewok, Cope – Queens 2001

Graffiti Hall of Fame, Spanish Harlem 2001

Stan 153: "In the early seventies graffiti was basically a neighborhood thing"



Stan153 painting in Hall of Fame – 2001

Stan 153 is often mentioned as a source of inspiration for the first generations of writers. He has followed the development of graffiti from the tags of 1969 to the 3D pieces of today. In the classic book *Getting Up*, he helped to tell the story of graffiti, here is his own story.

"The first names I saw was Taki 183 and Joe 182. Me and a friend were coming back from a hobby shop because we used to run these little cars. I saw that every station from Brooklyn all the way to 145 street had a Taki and a Joe tag on them. I wanted to be like them.

Back in 1969 graffiti was everybody's voice. I think I was between 12 or 13. I'm 42 now and I know I was really young."

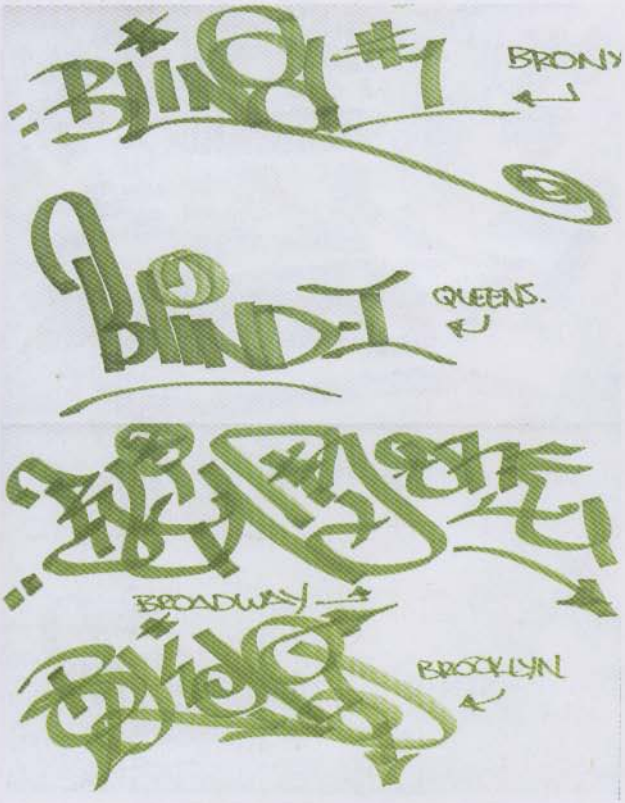
Stan had a hard upbringing. By the age of one he was adopted by friends of his mother's. His new dad was the one who had supplied his mom with the drugs that made her incapable of taking care of her son.

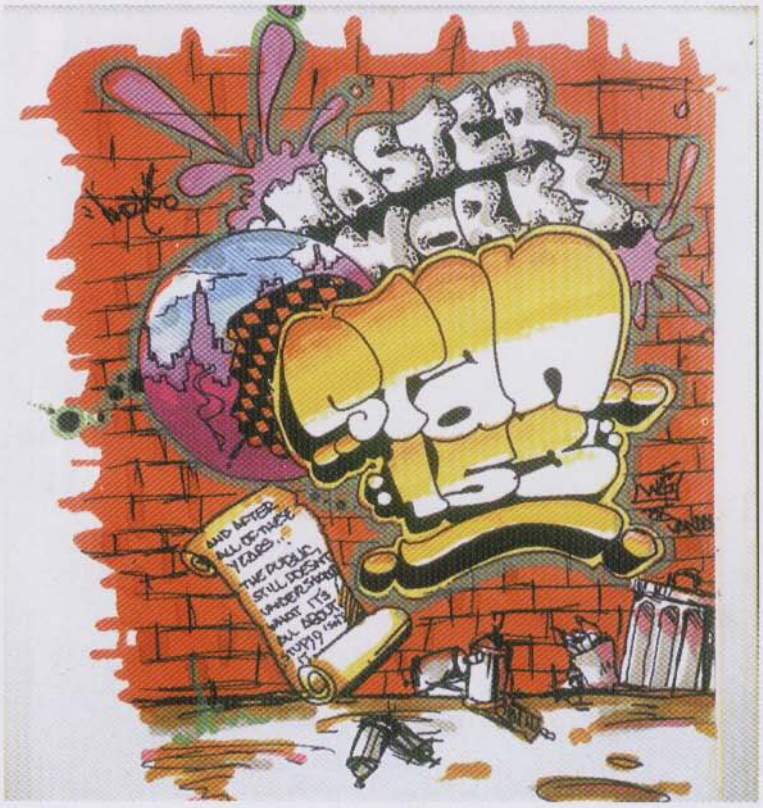
"My father was a hustler and a pimp. I basically lived in a black hustler drama family, everyday somebody got beat up in my family or in the house or my dad beat someone's butt. Every single person in my family within a five-year period either died of cancer, bullet wounds or something.

I kind of stumbled upon graffiti and it was my way out. It was my rites of manhood. Once I became a graffiti artist and understood there was a graffiti family all over New York City, I never went back. Graffiti showed me that I can draw and that life isn't as bad as it could be. Graffiti also gave me a sense of myself. And it gave me the sense to give all this magic that was given to me back to the community."

Stan kept In touch with his biological mom. He would spend weekends downtown and weekdays in impoverished Harlem.

"Part of me was, 'hey dude what's happening', the other part was, 'yo, step off'. I was a hybrid, a lot of times when I came uptown the black guys said: 'yo! you sound like a white guy'. 'No, I'm just intelligent,' I said. Everything I learnt downtown I took





Stan demonstrates the old styles from the different bouroughs with a Blind tag.

with me uptown to make them smarter."

Nevertheless Stan thinks his upbringing was positive. Since he is an only child, he sees all his friends as family. He is a very open and friendly guy. According to him, his adoption taught him a lot about people and about handling conflicts.

"In a graffiti beef, for example, if I know everybody, I can walk in the middle and say 'hey, lets not fight, lets talk about this.'

Also when it came to the graffiti work shops like NOGA and UGA, all those guys knew me and I was also part of almost every graffiti work shop out there, even though I wasn't accepted in UGA."

NOGA (Nation of Graffiti Artists) and UGA (United Graffiti Artists) were the first organizations that arranged graffiti exhibitions. Stan describes his role in the young graffiti scene of New York as a link between writers from different boroughs.

"In the early seventies graffiti was basically a neighborhood thing, kids would write in their building saying: 'I'm king of this building'.

Cliff 159 and Jester 1 where like neighborhood heroes but they were a little more than that, they also wrote on trains. I found out that they were friends of mine since the first grade so I asked them to show me their work."

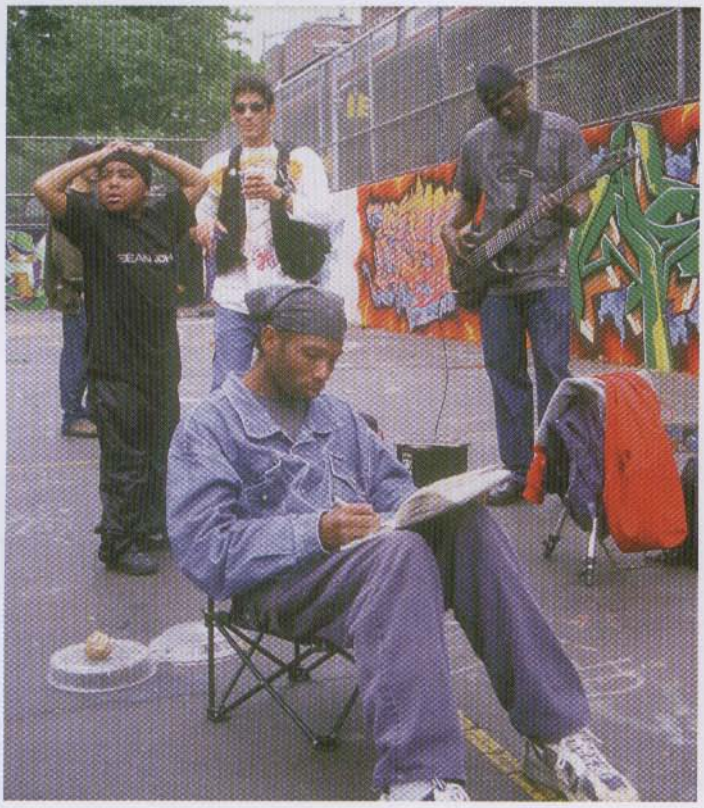
Cliff and Jester introduced Stan to Phase 2, T-Rex and the other Bronx writers that used to gather at a coffee shop across the street from DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx. Instead of going to school he started to hanging out in the Coffee Shop and at Writers Bench at 149th street and Grand Concourse.

"I started picking up Bronx style but at the same time I was still hanging out in Harlem with all the Harlem artists and all the guys from the three yard. If you were from Manhattan and came up to the Bronx, usually you would get into a fight. Since I was accepted in both Manhattan and the Bronx I was combining styles and also taking Bronx guys to Manhattan and Manhattan guys to the Bronx."

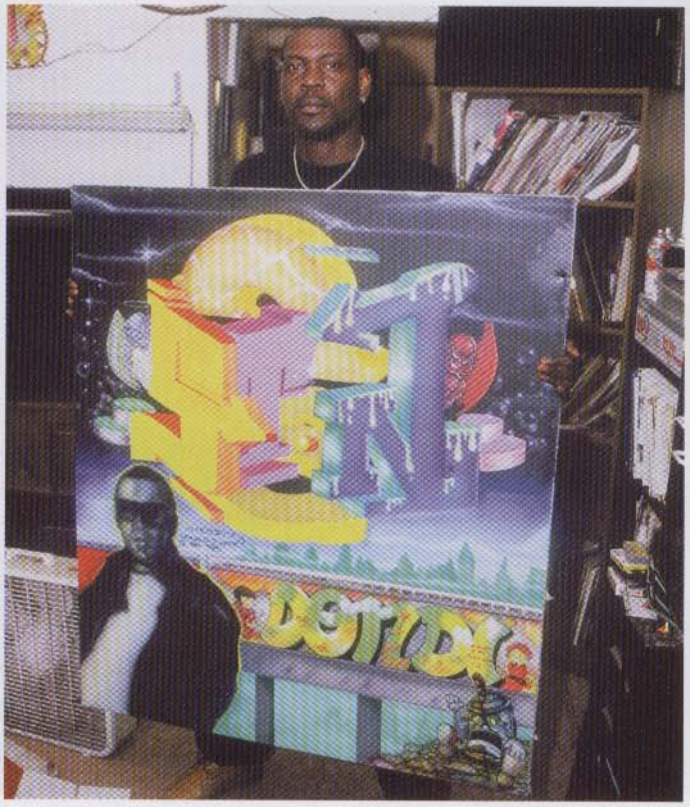
In 1973, a conflict between Stan's crew the Three Yard Boys (3yb) and the Soul Artists further united the graffiti community. The Soul Artists had painted a Soul Art-

Stan

Lase, Kase 2, Ease, Swet, Stan 153, character by PC-kid, Chain 3 – Hall of Fame 2001



Stan`s on the bass in Hall of Fame – 2001



Memorial Piece for Dondi

ist car that came into the three yard and the 3yb had crossed it out.

"It was supposed to be a meeting down at 103rd street and Broadway. Everybody heard about it and came down there. Honestly, I think it was between 1500 and 2000 writers there. It started up being a fight but it ended up being like a meeting. We took it over to River Side Drive and actually people sat down and voted writers into such and such group or kicked people out. Instead of a fight, everybody ended up talking to each other and there was no more beef. Soul Artists and 3yb kind of joined. After that I was a member of 3yb, The Soul Artists, INDs, The Ebony Dukes, I was basically part of everybody's group."

Stan was taught by Phase 2, Riff 170 and Spenso 1. His style is a combination of his experiences - the Manhattan, Bronx and Brooklyn styles, and now also the European style.

"Back in the seventies I was considered a style master because I was passing out styles to everybody. But all these styles came from the styles that I was in contact with - one big hybrid of everything. The good thing of being around was I got to see all these things - the first top to bottom - I was there, the first 3D, the first cloud, the first example of bubble letters going into arrows."

Stan is happy to share his knowledge with new generations of writers, Repeatedly he tells how important it is to give something back to the culture that gave him so much.

"The only way to keep everything going is to give what you have to someone new, just like Noc 167 did. When I met Noc he was a new writer and I liked his artwork and vice versa. Both of us built each other. We drew and worked on the style together.

Every style from there on - Dondi style and everything else - all started by watching us. Noc ended up getting a little high out there and started handing the style out."

Stan and Noc had decided to keep their style to themselves. But when Stan came home from work he saw a character from one of his sketches passing by on the train. First Stan got upset but then he realized it was also good that new writers where born and continued developing their style.

Stan looks younger than his 42 years, but several of the writers in his generation bear the marks of a hard life, scars and missing teeth. Many come from backgrounds that are reminiscent of Stan's.

"A lot of old school writers are either drunks or really fucked up. Graffiti also has got a lot of beef in it. If a graffiti beef happened some one might get hit in the head with a pipe or something, I was lucky, I don't fight. If someone fights I just walk away, I wanna live.

With graffiti anybody can become a somebody if you actually work hard at it. After working so hard, if somebody crosses out your name that will hurt. Graffiti beef is like a rumor that takes a life of its own. The graffiti grapevine in New York is strong: if something happened over in Brooklyn, within 20 minutes to half an hour everybody in the city knew about it and we didn't even have cell phones.

It's always gonna be beef because people always have opinions, graffiti is a very self-centered, egotistical art form. And New York is a very self-centered place, everybody thinks everything starts and ends here. Up until the internet opened up we didn't even know somebody was writing in Europe. Because most people never left, we started everything and blah, blah, blah."

Stan has participated in over 125 exhibitions, held lectures about graffiti at the School of Visual Arts and worked as an art teacher. Now he works behind the counter in a shop. But what consumes him most right now is the funk-rock band Ex-Vandals, in which he plays bass. The Ex-Vandals was the first real graffiti crew, founded as an alternative to the violent gangs that made life insecure for writers in the early seventies.

Four of the Ex-Vandals rock band's five members are from the crew with the same name: Wicked Gary, Bama One, Stan 153 and Salsoul One. The fifth member, Melvin Gibbs, is the only one not to be a writer. The Ex-Vandals was a huge crew back in the days, what happened to all the other guys?

"A lot of them have family, some are dead. They ended up taking different paths in life but a lot of them still meet up in Wicked Gary's house. Once a year we have a meeting. The doors are open for everyone, old school and new school. A lot of the Ex-Vandals grew up, but once you're in it you don't get out, it's almost like the Mafia. You wont get out until you're dead."

Malcolm Jacobson and Jacob Kimvall

Doc – Studying the best

"Yo shorty, whatever you do make sure nobody goes over this.!"

Doc recalls his first meeting with writers in the autumn of 1977: he had been watching while two writers made a piece in his neighbourhood. Now they were ready and told him to make sure nobody crossed the piece out. Doc couldn't understand this. Why should anyone want to cross it out? They told him that there were writers everywhere and that the work could be destroyed by jealous rivals or enemies.

"They intrigued me that there was this system in effect and that it was something big going on. I was like, I can do that."

Doc started writing, and in the nearly 25 years since then, has learned the system of graffiti better than most. But it could have ended in 1981, when Doc felt satisfied and fulfilled, and thought that he had achieved what he wanted from the start: he had learnt to do pieces and got some fame.

Doc told his friend Beam1, that he was gonna quit. But Beam1 thought that Doc could do better and showed him a photo of a magnificent piece by Dondi. Doc realised that he had achieved nothing as yet, and started studying with Dondi.

Dondi and Doc came from the same neighbourhood, but in 1981 Dondi was already a legendary writer who had formed a school with his pieces. He was also an experienced teacher, but according to Doc, Dondi was disappointed in his former students and thought none of them had realised their full potential.

"The only one of Dondi's early students that really became something was Duro. And that wasn't until he had left Dondi. Dondi was incredible. It was almost like he was too good – the more you watched him the worse you became."

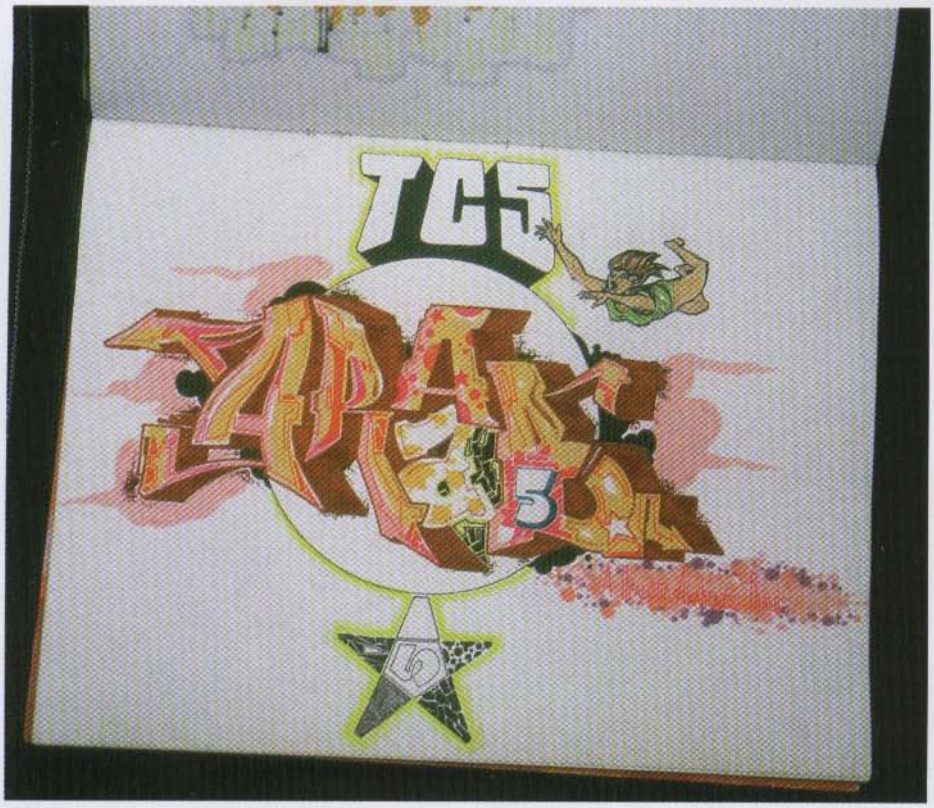
So when Dondi took on Doc, he consciously decided not to give him any practical tips. Instead, he told him of the history of graffiti, and pointed out different things to look for.

"I never got a single outline from Dondi. He told me folklore, stories and attitude. And I learnt that it was important for him to be the best."

Doc maintains that stylistic studies are almost as important to graffiti as the painting itself, and apart from Dondi he has studied Slave, Chain 3, Kool 131, Butch 2 and Riff 170, writers he thinks are the best ever.

"The only one I've studied under personally was Dondi and Chain 3 a little bit. The

Arab TC5 by Doc



Arab TC5 by Doc. The Crazy Five was founded in the mid-70s, and became one of the biggest crews of that decade, made immortal by hundreds of wholecars by writers like Blade.

In the early 80s, Blade's partner Comet turned TC5 over to a younger generation of writers, amongst them Doc. Sometimes they are known as The Cool Five to distinguish them from the older members.

other ones I studied from afar, but researching their work, trying to get photos of pieces that I never saw, and understanding how they built and constucted their pieces so that I could reproduce that."

Most artists have idols, but in graffiti, few openly acknowledge their appreciation of their role models, perhaps out of fear of being accused of biting as a result of studying someone too profoundly. But according to Doc, it is the other way round: it is by the thorough study of earlier writers that you acquire consciousness of your own style.

"When you study someone's style, you can reproduce it, but you put your own into it because you're not copying, you're only using their essence, you're using whatever ideology of constructing letters, that's why it will always look different. By studying, you study the foundation and put it into your work. With biting you go like 'Ooh I like the way he did that, I'm gonna change that R into a P'. That's just a straight up biter.

All the best writers tutored under somebody either directly or indirectly. And that's kind of how the whole style was handed down. You can always trace a genealogy of where a writer came from.

I studied five to six of the best writers that ever lived but when people look at my work they don't say I bited them. I'm using the foundation of their styles and mix it into mine. When you do it that way it is still true and pure. It's almost like you're down with them. You just take the same thought process and move it over and expand it.

A biter has no history, he is gonna bite from everybody so in history, no one is gonna think that this person is important. Because he didn't do anything important. People is gonna say, he is just a biter. So what if he can paint? He didn't create anything. He copied it."

Doc himself says he is a traditionalist. He is not much given to wild formal experiments, graffiti that approaches mural art or the 3D style developed in Europe that younger New Yorkers have started using in later years.

"I look at talented guys like Loomit and Mode 2, those guys can paint unbelievable, I wish I could paint as good as them but they concentrate more on the artistic on their work than they do on the letters. Now that's not a problem if that's what you wanna be. But if you wanna be in this community at some time you got to go back to the essence and paint letters and letters only, and master that, then go back to the artwork. So I'm not dissing them, I'm just saying in 20 years when they mention these guys names, don't be suprised if they mention them only for their backgrounds and never wanna observe their piece work.

I don't wanna be remembered like that. That's not what I try to achieve. I don't wanna be grouped with Picasso and Van Gogh, I wanna be grouped with Dondi and Chain 3.

I'm a traditionalist in a sense, writers are supposed to write letters simple and plain, I can't make it any clearer than that. If you're not writing letters you're not a writer. I don't need all the fancy trims, I can use three colors, one outline and a cloud and sizzle, every writer should be able to do that."

Today Doc is a responsible family provider who works in subway tunnel construction, and also operates a sound system at private parties and clubs. When he paints in the Hall of Fame, he brings chairs, tables and a tent to shield him, his family and equipment against sun and rain. His eldest

Knows by Wane, Aphex, Arab by Doc, Wen. Characters By Doc and Wen – 2001

Wane, TDS by Part and Supreme by Doc – 2001

son films him as he paints.

In graffiti, he sees his role mainly as a teacher and historian. He also sees himself as a link between the older and younger generations of writers. One of his goals is to reintroduce the battle, for while he is careful to give respect to his role models, Doc thinks that the New York graffiti scene is too kind today. When the subway was being painted, there was constant competition for the best style.

"It's not like it was before, where if you did something on Monday every one saw it by Wednesday, and everbody was trying to compete. That whole rivalry is gone because the train is gone, so the only time people see each other's work is in places like Halls of Fame and it doesn't happen too often."

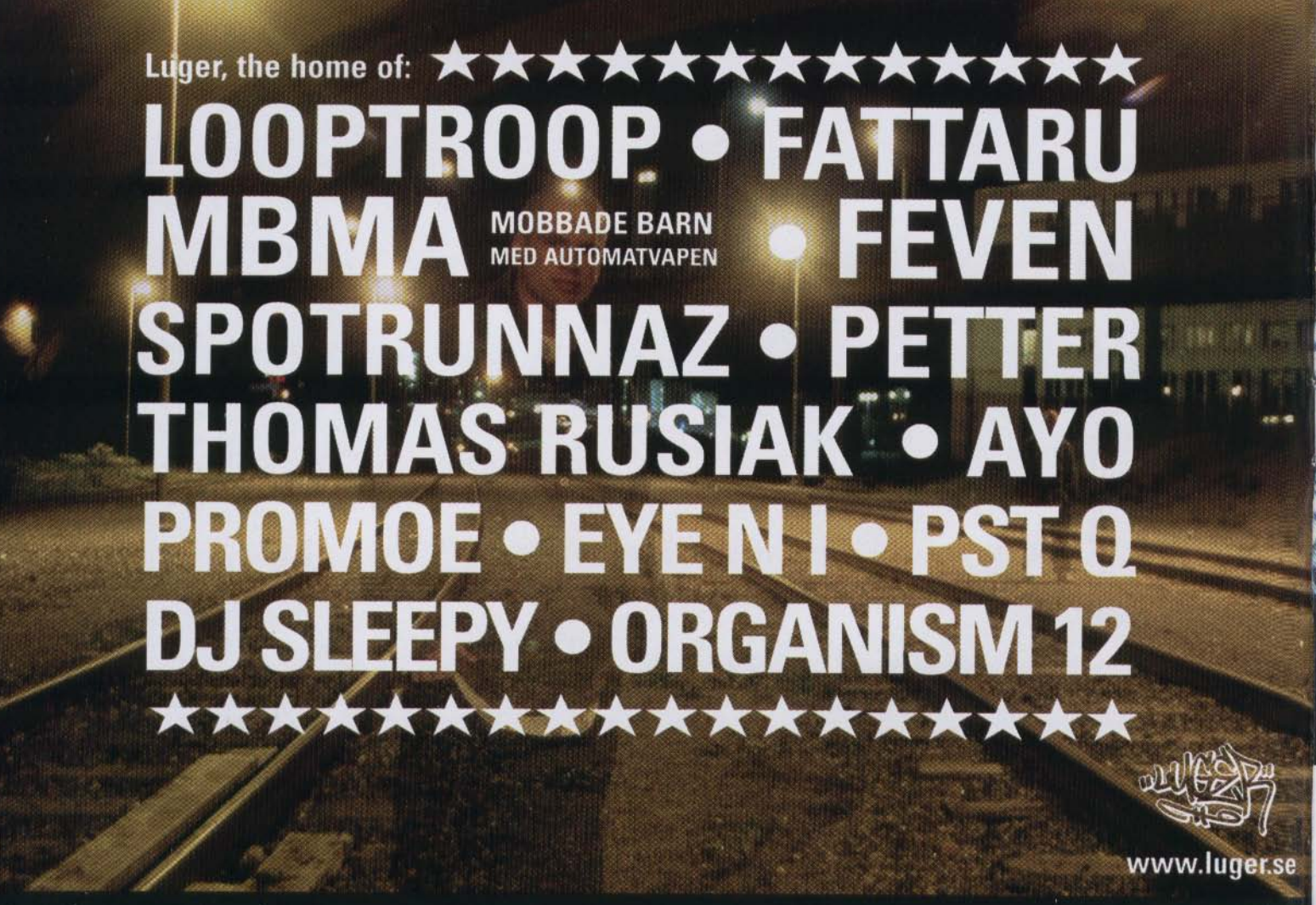
According to Doc, battling is the best way to develop your style, he even battles with his friends. When he writes, he goes in with the idea that he is going to do the best piece, and it is up to those he is writing with to prove him wrong.

"When you battle you stretch your limits, you create a pressure. That's how you know if a building is gonna last, if it can take pressure. If you never compete and put pressure on yourself, you will never know if you're really that good. You have to battle every time, everybody you paint with, because if you don't have in mind you're the best, you never will be the best."

Jacob Kimvall and Malcolm Jacobson

A classic piece: Skeme and Chain 3 in front of their pieces, but this time not on the third rail

T-Bag alias Chain 3 circa 1982: One of the writers Doc has studied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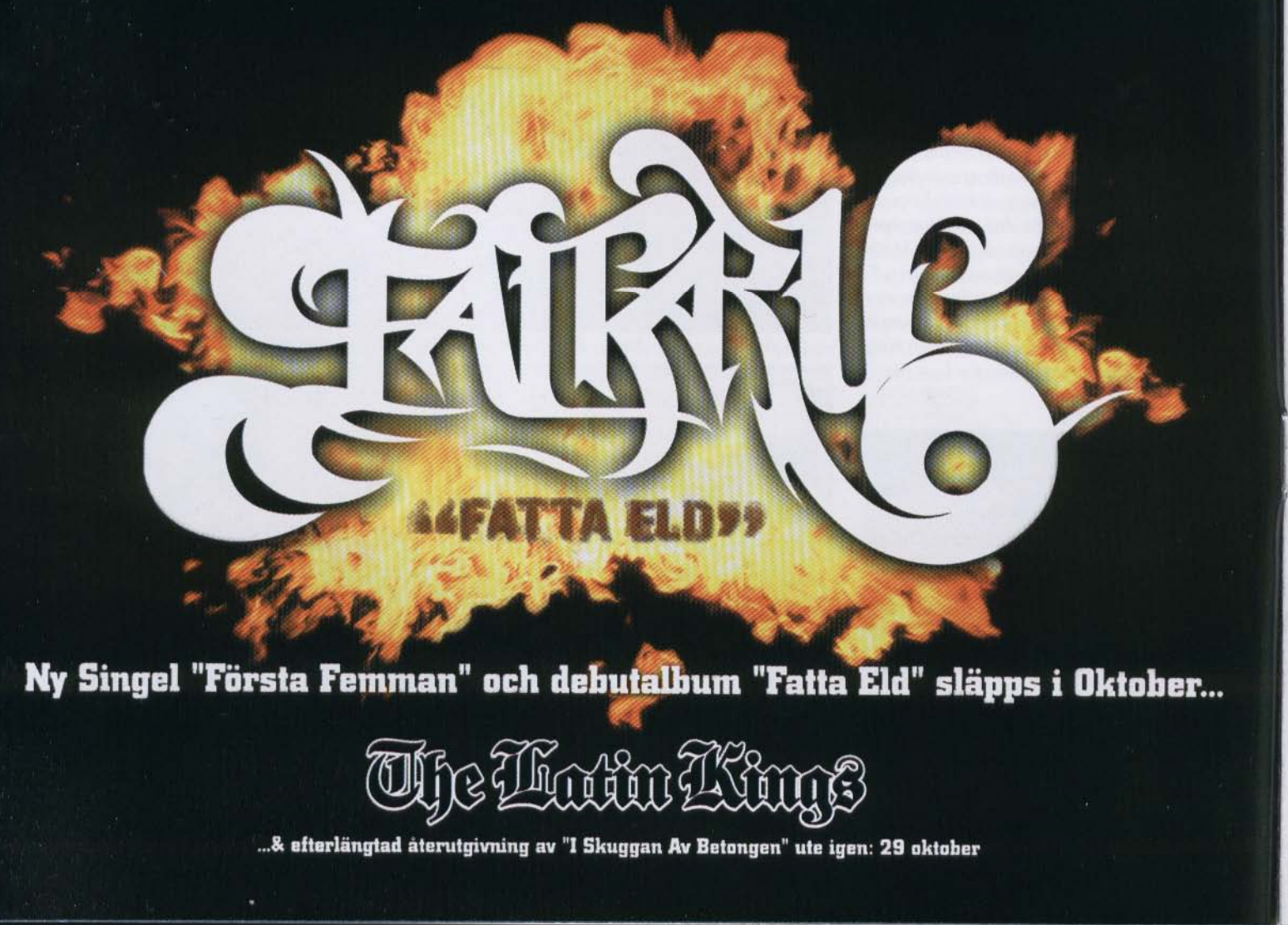

FATTA ELD
"FATTA ELD"
Ny Singel "Första Femman" och debutalbum "Fatta Eld" släpps i Oktober...
The Latin Kings
...& efterlängtad återutgivning av "I Skuggan Av Betongen" ute igen: 29 oktober

Since we are not sure when and by who all this piece were done we chose to leave out that information.

This is stuff you don't see no more

Though graffiti hasn't been seen in the New York Subway for more than ten years, painted trains still play a big part In the New York graffiti scene. Through pictures and narrative, they energize the culture. The photographs are often of terrible quality, since they go through many exchanges and copying processes, and are often originally photographed using Inadequate Instamatic cameras.

But they are sufficient to recall memories of a time when a bunch of teenagers were In charge of Subway décor.

Some pieces have become classics, but many photographs exist that have yet to reach a wider audience. Slin 2 and Merk 1 are two of New York's dedicated collectors. They have several portfolios full of old subways. They don't care who took the pictures, the most important thing is to own them. How come you collected all these photos?

Slin 2: Well, we started taking pictures around 1981. It's good to take photos because in the future you will not see these no more.

You get to meet people. They got pictures that we don't have, we've got pictures that they don't have, we get together, show pictures, trade pictures.

If we didn't have no pictures we wouldn't meet nobody. Like me and Merk, I didn't know he had pictures and he didn't know I got pictures and then we got together and we changed pictures. We talk about them,

because when you look into a picture, that picture can tell you a lot of things. What happened that day, where it's at, who did it, when it was done and this and that.

Merk 1: When we get together and display our books to other writers they can reminiscence that moment - "yeah I remember seeing this at that moment" - and then another person can relate to that. It can be a whole group of people and we might not know one another but by the time that conversation ends, we will all know one another and have deep respect for one another.

Slin 2: Lots of the old school writers don't even got these photos. If they see it they go - "oh man I haven't seen this in years, it's a good copy, can I get it?". We make him a copy, we don't give him these. I would not lend my portfolio to nobody.

UP: Do you spend more time with your photos than with you own art work?

Merk 1: To tell you the truth I spend more time with my photographs because we only go out painting in the weekends, we go to a nice little spot where we can paint, that's it. I can't afford going out bombing or piecing in week days because I work.

Slin: We do it once in a while, not as we used to, walking around doing roof tops, it's not really like that any more.

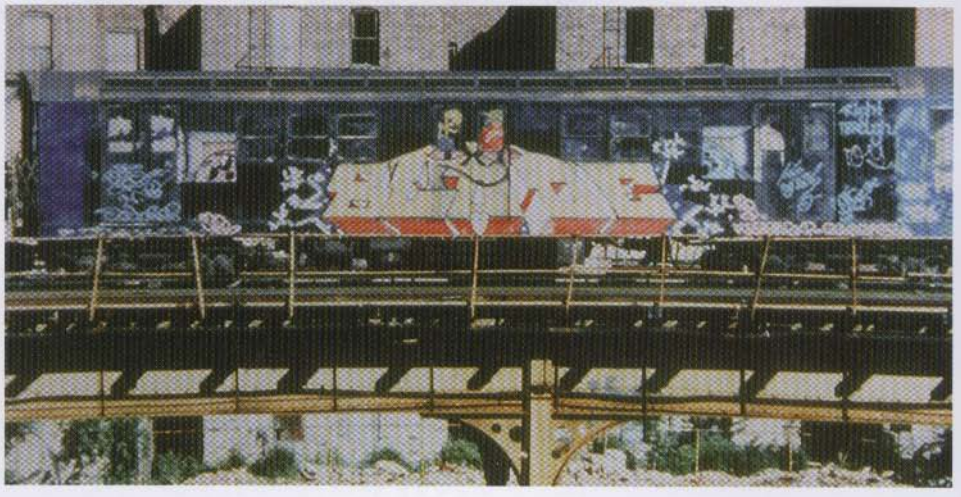
UP: What inspired you to take photos?

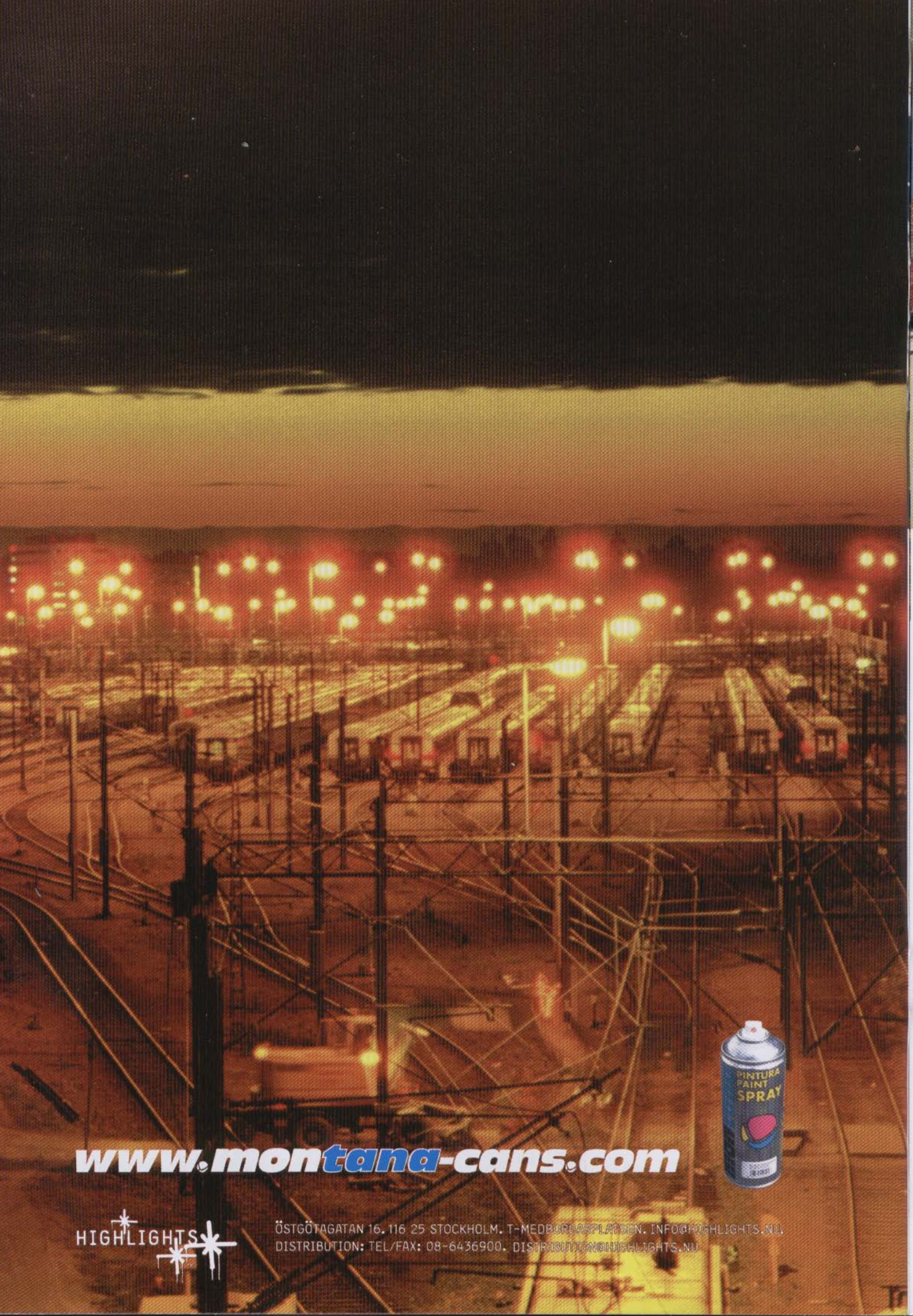
Merk 1: Slin, getting on my ass. I used to take pictures with a little bullshit camera, a 110 camera. Basically I have my pictures in bags, old shoe boxes, Slin is a really organized person, he says - "Merk you should have your stuff in a portfolio". And he's right, because this is stuff that you don't see no more and I should have more respect for this than just have it in a bag because this is something that I live for. This is what I identify with, because of this I am the person that I am. Graffiti is not gonna pay my bills or anything like that, but this is what I identify with, this is what I relate to. When I'm not working this is my world.

Slin 2: I love it, it's art and I have always been doing graffiti, I was doing it on the subways, then it dropped dead and there was no more subways. It's something to remind me of what I used to do back in the old days, back in the eighties. There was so much things like this, it was so easy walking into the station, and just do your name and no cops would stop you.

Malcolm Jacobson

All photos from Slin's and Merk's collection





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Roger, DSF – Rooftops in Berlin

DSF – Enemies of the state

The DSF crew is synonymous with friendship and conviviality even though its members are spread over European countries. We met two of the stylistically most distinguished writers of the crew, Rage from Hamburg and Relax from Berlin.

DSF originally meant *Der Stör Faktor* (The Disturbing Factor), but now it rather means *Der Stats Fiend* (Enemy of the State). The crew began in a small town near Hamburg and has members in cities in northern Europe.

"Roger originally introduced us Berlin writers to Hamburg writers, as he once lived near there. All the members of the Berlin-based KHC crew (*Krumme Lanke Hänge Crew*) joined DSF," Relax explains. Relax doesn't think of it as a problem that the crew Is spread over several cities and countries. They still meet up a few times a year.

"It's important for us to travel. It's fun to see new cities and meet new people. When I come to Stockholm and meet Phily, I also get the chance to see the city in a different way from a normal tourist. Many DSF members travel. When I was younger I would travel by Interrail, staying at most a day in each city, which stops you from learning anything."

In Sweden, many people think of the German Graffiti scene as insular and hardcore. Is this correct?

"There is a hardcore attitude with some. It sells very well in West Germany. In earlier times, the Berlin scene was more divided and aggressive. People argue less now. It's relaxed, people work together, and the scene keeps growing. Before, I used to hate buying cans because you could get robbed by other writers. It might be because I am older now that I feel more secure, I don't get into any fights that may break out. The problems may still remain, but I don't see them," says Relax.

Rage relates that the Hamburg Graffiti scene has been divided after having grown very rapidly. Pieces get defaced and violence occurs. Other writers are a greater problem the than police and guards.

"In the early days of Hamburg graffiti people were making more together. Now it has changed, others don't like you writing too much, you get enemies. I only write with six other writers in Hamburg."

The Berlin scene is about three times as big as Hamburg's. Secrecy is not such a great consideration in Berlin. It is easier to be open.

The Hamburg and Berlin styles differ, too. In Hamburg, large conceptual works are

Rage – Vienna Subway

Rebel, Arom – Stop Castor, Germany

more usual, while Berlin has more street bombing and pieces. Since trains are quickly cleaned, the city walls are the place to strut your stuff. In East Berlin especially there are many street pieces which are rarely cleaned away, probably because the landlords can't afford this or do not consider it important.

"The German attitude is different from Sweden's. In Berlin, you cannot depend on an individual calling the police if they see you doing a tag, and people rarely try to apprehend you. People don't care as much," says Relax.

This also applies to train drivers. According to Rage, they are afraid of writers who often don robbers' face-masks to avoid identification.

DSF often differ stylistically from other writers. Neither Rage nor Relax has a particularly German style.

"Most of us in the crew have a style of our own that differs from the traditional German wildstyle, which might be what keeps us together," opines Relax.

"I want the onlooker to be able to see who has done the painting from afar, even If he can't make out the letters. The style should distinguish the writer," says Relax.

It was in 1995 that Relax started to reflect on style differently.

"I wanted to set myself apart from the main, break off from traditional German wildstyle. Now I no longer think that way, I don't do paintings to set myself apart, but more to set my new stuff apart from my old stuff. When I started off, Berlin was more into a homogenous style, people didn't like you doing something different. That has all changed; now, there are several styles.

I always try to do something new, but within my style. For the time being my style

Relax – Berlin Subway

DSF – Berlin Subway

Roger – Berlin Subway

DSF – Steeltrain in Germany

DSFamely by Phily and Arom – Married Couple, Hamburg Subway

is geometric, but that may change completely in two years."

Rage says that Hamburg has a tradition of wildstyle writing, but now people are developing and experimenting more:

"I think change is important, otherwise things get boring. I try to make my style very abstract, to make it harder for policemen and guards to see what it says."

Would your style be different if there were no policemen?

"I guess so, but it would probably still be abstract. It's more fun to look at an abstract painting, there's more to see."

Rage prefers to write on trains. He recently did his first panel on the Hamburg subway, where he has previously only painted wholecars.

"Trains are easier to do than walls if you know the place where the train stands. When you write a wall, there's a greater risk of being seen, and then you don't know whether to run or stay put. That's not the way with trains: there aren't many people who can see you, and if someone does, you know it's time to split. Also, there's no trouble finding a free space, so you don't have to write over an old piece.

At first, I mainly did long-distance trains, but now I stick to local trains and subways, which are safer. I don't like the yards out in the country, where people can get suspicious.

I don't do many Halls of Fame, mainly because I don't want to spend cans on them. I don't like the fact that paintings get covered so quickly."

On the other hand, the fact that trains get cleaned in a few hours is just fine.

"I'm not interested in fame. It's nice that they clean the trains so quickly that nobody sees the piece but me."

Relax started writing in Halls of Fame and enjoys it.

"Now I try most things: walls, trains, streetbombing. Graffiti is more than just trains and bombing. There are several Halls of Fame in Berlin. The place I like most is Mauerpark, where there is almost always someone writing, chilling and drinking beer," says Relax.

How do you view Graffiti as an art form?

"I don't regard a hasty chrome panel as art. The walls that Loomit does may be, but what I'm doing is something else," says Rage.

"I disagree, I don't want to draw any limits to what makes art and what doesn't. I think that Graffiti is a kind of action art, a lifestyle," says Relax.

Malcolm and Torkel

DSF by Arom – Rotterdam Subway

Rache – Wholecar on the Hamburg Subway

Roger – front on Berlin Subway

DSF – Berlin commuter train

DSF by Roger in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Reb, Rage... – Stockholm Subway

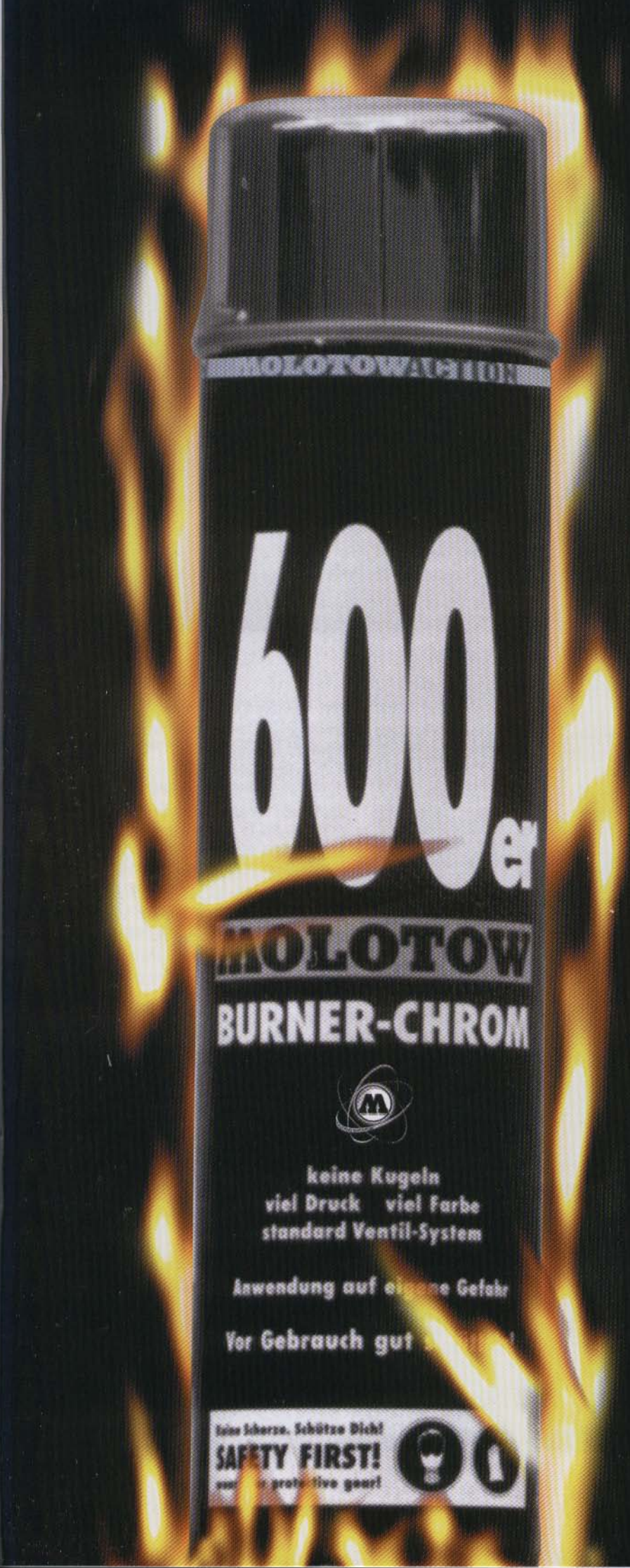
Dair – Berlin S-bahn

...KHC by Relax on the Stockholm Subway

DSF – Berlin Subway

DSF – Longdistanstrain in Germany

Relax on a Copenhagen S-train



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The walls are situated in the Raval area

Barcelona – a city full of symbols

Located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea about an hour from the French border, Barcelona has in later years become increasingly interesting as regards Graffiti. Many are the writers who have come to visit the city, if not to ply their trade, to get a tan, bathe and relax.

Inside the city, you soon discover that, apart from tags, different symbols also frequently appear. The most famous, a beige hand (*La Mano*), co-exists with a gallows, a fish, a toilet roll and others. Together with the street pieces and tags, they combine to give Barcelona an expression of its own.

The city is not overrun by tags despite the fact that they are not erased very often, and are placed sporadically across pretty much the entire city.

Barcelona enjoys a few Halls of Fame that are worth a visit if you want to write in peace and quiet and enjoy the heat.

The biggest of them, and presumably the best known, is situated next to the Modern Museum of Barcelona, MACBA, and it is painted over both by Spanish and foreign writers. However, it is the best policy to be careful not to write over some new painting by one of the toys who honour the wall with their work, lest a pubescent teen with erratic chin stubble yell at you in Spanish from his new moped.

Another Hall of Fame is located near the Raval area, by the docks. Here, too, the quality of the paintings differs wildly.

The subway is almost entirely subterranean, and it is hard to find many pieces in its tunnels, stations or along its tracks. It is mainly along the local train tracks that writing occurs; some are almost entirely covered in Graffiti. Some more-or-less legal Halls of Fame also grace these tracks.

Barcelona's white subway is hard to reach.

Unknown

Along the Cercania commuter line in Barcelona: La Mano...

Jorone, Paoir, Mike – 2001

Hola – 2001

Seyd, Tek – 2001

Paintings are seldom allowed to run and most yards and lay-ups are below ground. But despite guards and sensors, it does get written on.

The mirror-equipped local trains (*Cercanias*) travel further than the subway, mainly above ground. They are often painted, and the paintings run for longer periods.

Paint, especially Montana, is cheap in Barcelona and the rest of Spain, and it is worth it to stock up if you are travelling further by Interrail.

Torkel

Star – 2001

Character by La Mano...

...Mbay – Barcelona subway 2001

Hio – 2001

Thek – 2001

Pieces reflecting in the window of a *Cercania* commuter car near Coslada Station east of Madrid

Madrid: Thousands of cameras constantly eyeing you

Puerta del Sol is Madrid's centre. A city of millions probably has several centres, but there is a sense of absolute middle point over Sol. This is an excellent place for the new visitor to explore the city. Why not begin the journey down Calle Arenal, towards the Opera?

On my first visit to Madrid in 1989 I walked down Calle Arenal. By the excellent sneaker shop T17, a group of youths came walking. This was the first time I met Spanish b-boys! The most visible among them had a ghetto blaster, name tag belt, gold chain and sneakers with fat laces. My father had to translate for me since I spoke no Spanish. They told me I could come to Nuevos Ministerios that Sunday. I already knew Nuevos Ministerios. We lived close by. Here, skyscrapers and apartment blocks fought for space, and in the middle was a mall. Adding police sirens, this was the closest I had ever come to New York!

On Sunday I was there. On the writer's bench were some fifty writers, all in shell suits and sneakers. Sketch pads and photo envelopes poked out of half-open backpacks. The area around it was covered in tags.

I approached the writers and recognised some of the ones I had met earlier. One of the writers offered to be my interpreter. I showed them my blackbook which in those days consisted of some five pieces. Moreover, I had brought some pictures from Stockholm of pieces by Slice, Code COC and Akay.

On a warm day in April 2001, I walk from Sol to Gran Via and then Paseo de la Castellana. I keep to the right side of the street, in the shade. Castellana is one of the vastest avenues I have ever seen, at least four lanes either way, with broad pavements and lawns. As I pass some large buildings I get a sensation of déja-vu. Haven't I?... Yes, I've been here before.

With some writers I went to a hidden wall behind the Museum of Natural Science. Here were some colour paintings. With me were, amongst others, Kool, Seeone, Snow and Sekhem. I wasn't that impressed by their burners; styles were not much developed since graffiti was still relatively new in Madrid.

I go up to the museum, take a left at the main building and go along the wall past a parking lot into the greenery. Behind bushes and trees, the wall still stands, with new pieces of course, but incredibly, some of Kool's characters are still visible under layers of new paintings.

We continued to the Underground train, where the Madrid writers tagged quite openly. They grinned at my worried looks and said that it was only the guards one had to watch out for. The tagging continued inside the train. Some twenty passengers looked on in interest: "Look, they are doing graffiti!"

Today the Metro is well-protected. A sign informs me that more than 1,000 CCTVs are watching me for my own protection. A

Characters seen in the streets

Weso, one of Kool's characters in the background

Burner piece from 1989: Kool and the Quick Silver Crew showing skills at a wall behind the Museum of Natural Science

HateOne

Dane at Paseo de la Castellana

Cenene

HearOne at Principe Pio Station

graffiti film from here has consequently been given the title *Mision Impossible*.

But on the street level, other laws apply. The first impression is of crowding. Pavements are narrow and traffic very dense. Everywhere people stand, sit, or lie, on every street, in every café and every park. The stream of humanity does not even abate at night.

It is nice to wander in a real city. A city is given character by its inhabitants, which is why the walls display an interesting urban flora of posters and various forms of expression. A writer tells me that this is now changing. After the death of the legendary writer Muelle in 1995, it was decided that his paintings should be protected and preserved. But now his legacy has been cleaned away. One of his paintings is still extant, on Montera, the prostitutes' street in the centre.

I'm fascinated by the amount of tags and fast pieces that decorate the rolling screens, *cierres*, that protect shop windows during closing hours. Writers I consign to memory are for example Buni, Nue and Quik and there are many interesting symbols: gallows, toilet rolls, saws.

Along overground train lines, *Cercanias*, and motorways, the walls are painted mile after mile. The divide between town and country is as sharp as a knife; one is constantly building outwards. In the fields, new suburbs shoot up like mushrooms from the ground. Everywhere are cranes and loading pallets bearing red brick to build large houses. However, few pieces actually catch my eye. Stylistically, the Madrid graffiti scene seems quite isolated.

After having visited too many tourist spots, I decide to try the clubs on Fuencarral. This long street, which is the in place for the Madrid alternative scene, stretches North of Gran Via. Here are shops that provide a different set of wares: Streetwear, records, their own clothes labels and much more. The night life is very good, masses of different clubs with different kinds of music.

Tobias Barenthin Linblad

Hate at Pacifico metro station

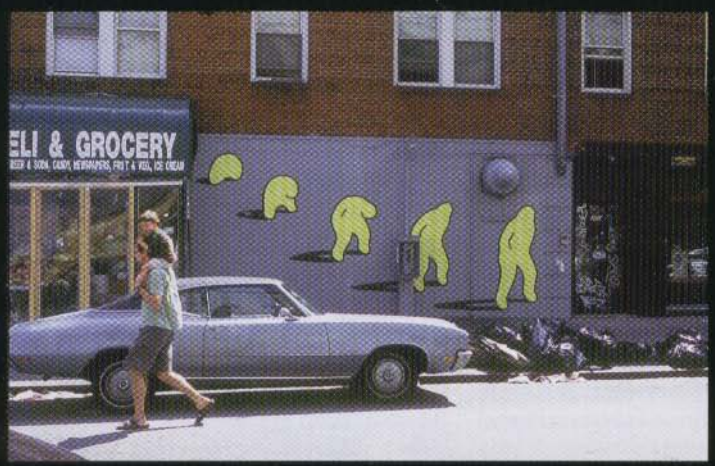
Spok and Hear at Pacifico metro station

One of many signs – 2001

Dr Sex near the Opera – April 2001

Bingo at a beach – 2001

Andre – Paris 2001



New York – 2001

Ri, Ri – Stockholm 2001

Poch – Orleans, 2001

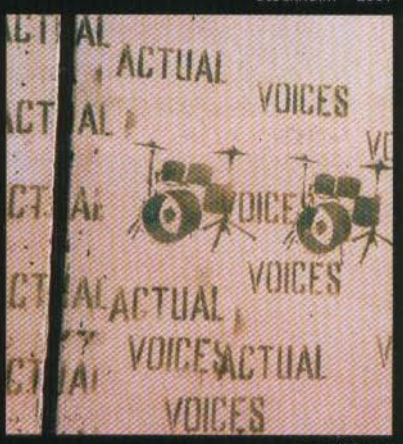
Poch – Orleans, 2001

Stockholm – 2001

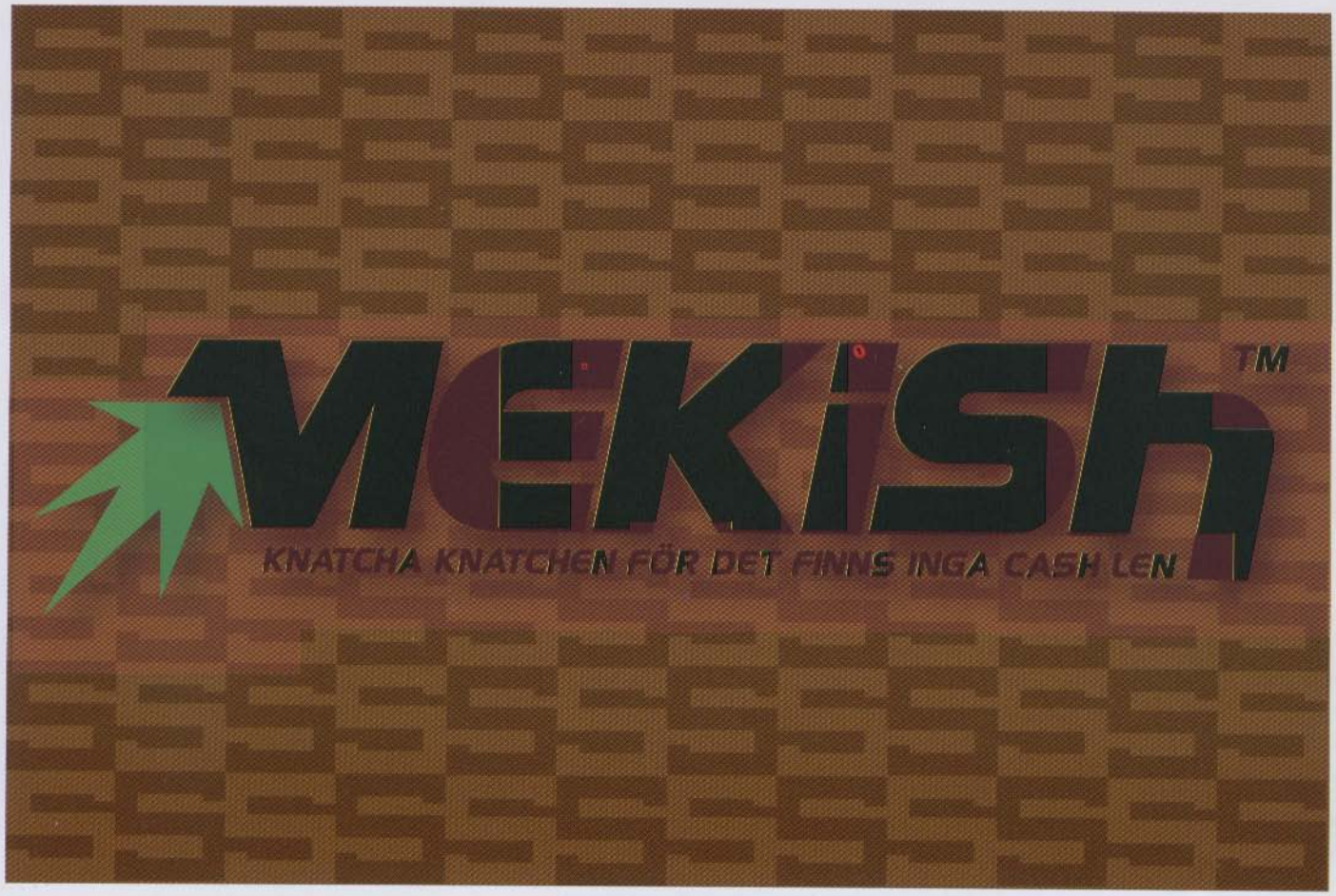
Temple – Stockholm 2001

London

Aero – Stockholm, 1990



Actual Voices



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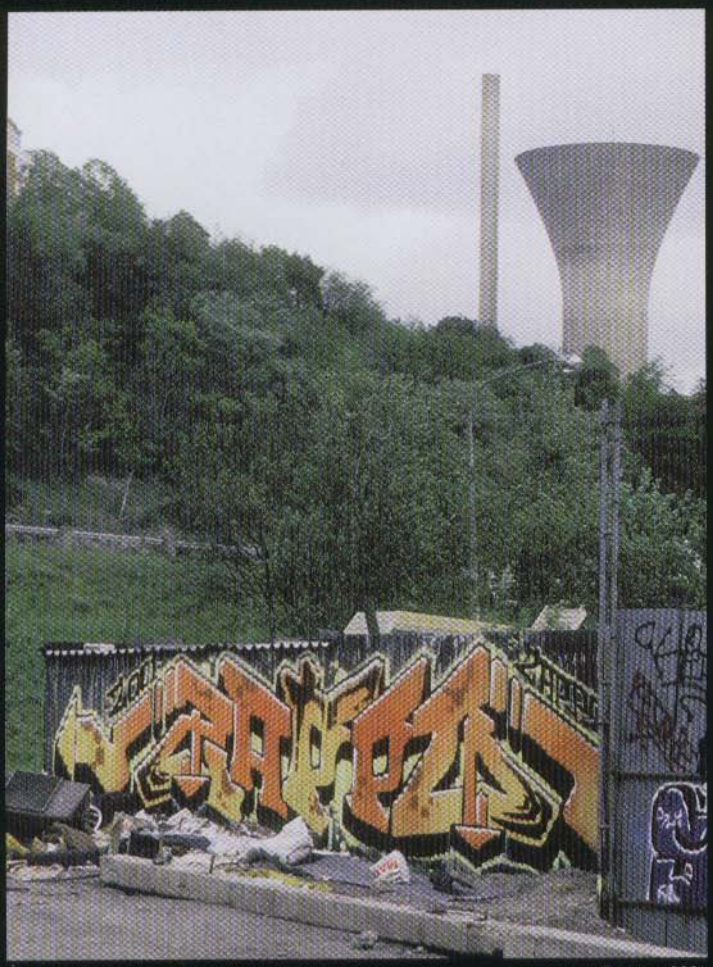


Zappo – 2001

...Static, Moas

Ruskig, Maes – 2001

Xakte

Seksi, Cazter, characters and background scenery by Ikaros – Norrköping 2001

Seksie – 2001

Characters by Wufc – 2001

Obe, Kaos, Maya Thea, Maks – 2001

Hook, Fof, Grey, Tres, Zege – 2001

Unknown

Karma, Ribe, Dne – 2001

Abos, Show, Grey, Ixodes, Reil – Norrköping 2001

Hotel, 7upp, character by Kropp – 2001

PBar, Dance, Saht – 2001

Fer – 2001

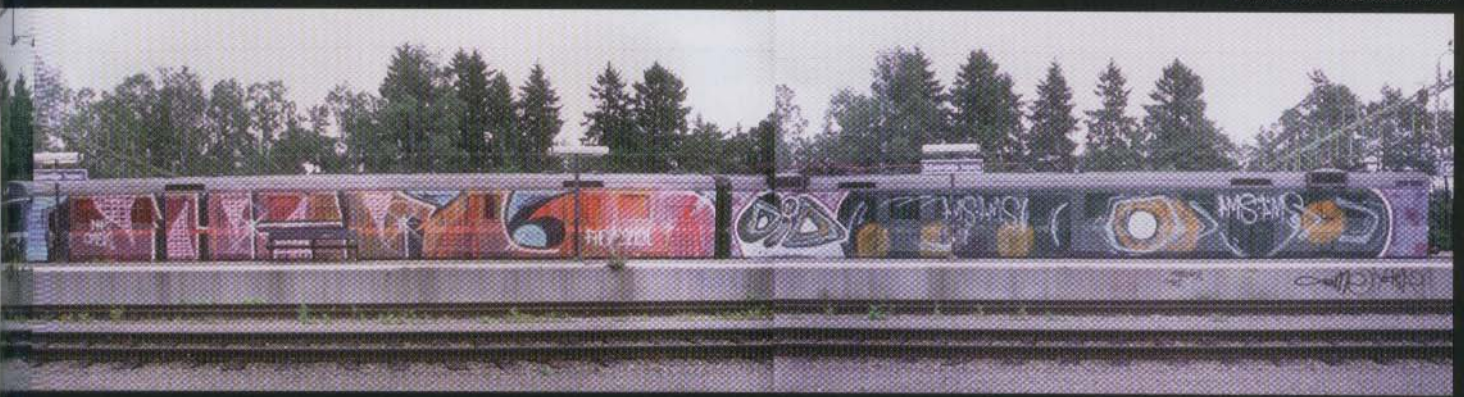
YeloOne – 2001

Hook MaHars – 2001

FLSMK – 2001

Irok, Noso, The NW, Deez

Show, VSN, Klas, Losk, Yelow...



...Damps, Lend, Fher, Oido – 8 car whole train September 2001

Oidor, Kuf – 2001

Milio, Sad, Pms – 2001

Ilc, Klas, Oidor, Pms 2001

Losk, Inout – 2001

Rest in Peace Joe 1973-2001

Joe was a writer from the Märsta commuter line who was most active in the mid nineties. He was an inspiration for several writers from his line. His friends and family will always remember him as a person who was friendly to everybody.

Pms, Mde – 2001

Ode –2001

Ida, 7dc – 2001

Rilo, Miers – 2001

Mis – 2001

Oidor, Svek – 2001

Pms, Hka, Lyic – 2001

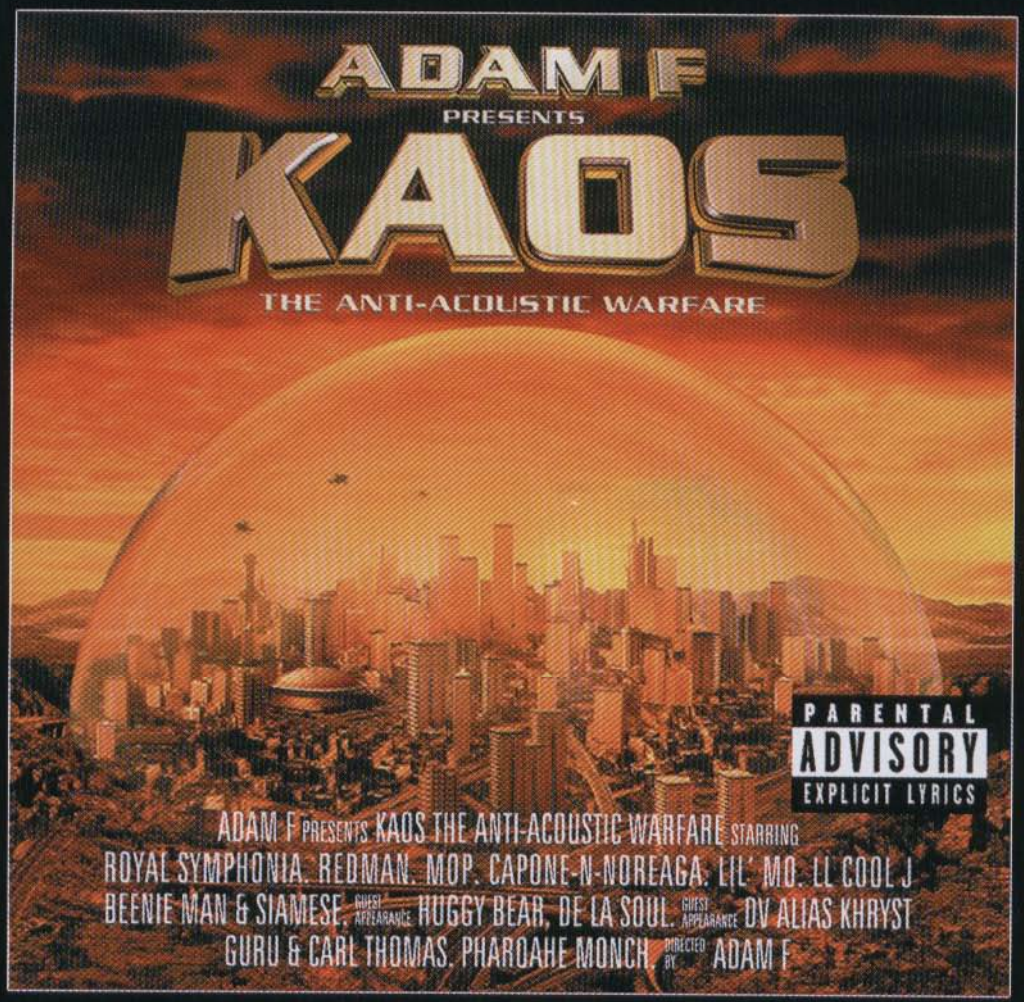
Nfc – 2001

ADAM F

PRESENTS

KAOS

THE ANTI-ACOUSTIC WARFARE


ADAM F
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KAOS
THE ANTI-ACOUSTIC WARFARE
PARENTAL
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT LYRICS
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BEENIE MAN & SIAMESE. GUEST APPEARANCE. HUGGY BEAR. DE LA SOUL. GUEST APPEARANCE DV ALIAS KHRYST
GURU & CARL THOMAS. PHAROAHE MONCH. DIRECTED BY ADAM F

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BEENIE MAN & SIAMESE. HUGGY BEAR. DE LA SOUL. DV ALIAS KHRYST.
GURU & CARL THOMAS. PHAROAHE MONCH.
DIRECTED BY ADAM F

EMI

REPRESENTS **STOCKHOLM SUBWAYS**

Rebl, Ode – 2001

Rilo – 2001

Mde – 2001

7dcida – 2001

Pms – 2001

Yxa – 2001

Sdk – 2001

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Sw, Ner – 2001

Cairo, Pbar, Hools – 2001

Ner – 2001

Leon – 2001

Fem – 2001

Heor, Stopp, Mentor – 2001

Ofee – 2001

Jiw, Jiwl – 2001

Stopp – 2001

Killers – 2001

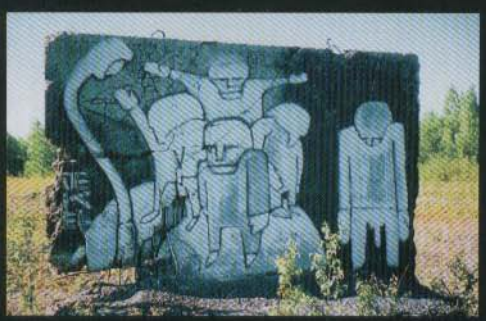
Sw – 2001

Fool – 2001

Besk – 2001

Marr, Heor, Hools, Leon, Ted – 2001

Reil, Ooye, Show, Ib, Kin – 2001



Jekel – Luleå 2001

PokerOner – Göteborg 2001

Trans – Umeå

Cake, Dekis – Uppsala 2001

Fiol, Bas – Gävle 2001

Fukzh, Silked, Ringo, Rick – Uppsala 2001

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